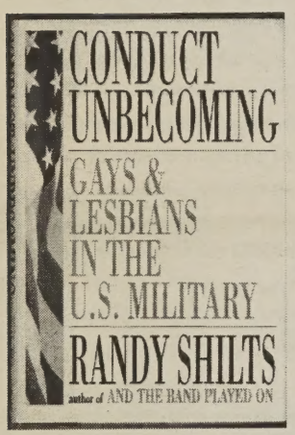
Gays-Military The Independent 4/17/96

Someone you know

A Publication by Ground Zero

CONDUCT UNBECOMING

by Randy Shilts
an interview by David Torrey



"Look at the inequality of it all." -- This was Randy Shilts' message in his book, *Conduct Unbecoming*. The book brings to light the unethical ways the military seeks out gays and lesbians in its ranks to discharge them; including personnel who have served long and well.

According to Carole Brock, friend to Randy Shilts and a subject in his book, Randy was disheartened to learn that far too many people who read *Conduct Unbecoming* were simply looking for "dirt" rather than the message he intended. Though Shilts has since died of AIDS, Brock continues to carry the message of military inequality, for she knows all too well the discrimination of gays and lesbians in the Armed Forces.

CAROLE'S STORY

Carole Brock enlisted in the Navy at age 19 looking for an opportunity to do something productive with her life. By the time her enlistment was up in 1980, she had achieved the rank of Engineman Second Class, was serving on the USS Norton Sound, one of the first Navy vessels to allow women onboard, had received recommendation for her first Naval achievement award and her evaluations proved her excelling on the job.

Then, five months before her enlistment was up, Carole and about half the women onboard were accused of being lesbians, including many straight women.

> "Look at the inequality of it all."

The Naval Investigative Service was immediately called in and a "witch hunt" ensued. Shilts describes these hunts like this: "There is a joke about the Naval Investigative Service (NIS) told among the Navy lawyers and judges -Call the NIS and tell them you've got a dead body and the agents may show up in the next week or so. Call and say you think the murderer was a homosexual and the agents will be there in 30 seconds."

Shilts states "their pursuit of homosexuals was an obsession," that it was easier to get prosecutions and "those (gay) discharges contributed to a high productivity level for the NIS" because discharges rarely fought back.

The captain of Brock's ship quickly announced the investigation to the entire crew. Brock said the harassment that followed was directed at every woman onboard. "Dyke's Den" was written above the women's berthing area and the constant verbal abuse was relentless. The NIS's "evidence" consisted of rumors, falsified statements and accusations based on "she looks gay," according to interviews of the women involved. (How ironic that the military regulations require women to wear their hair cut or tucked above the

See Conduct, pg.2

GUEST EDITORIAL

REFLECTIONS OF BILL BOUSHKA

The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is supposed to mean that the government, even in the military, is supposed to keep its hands off a recruit's or a cadet's sexual thoughts, and "don't pursue" (at least in practical administration) is intended to suggest that mearly associative behavior (including visiting legally operating gay businesses or marching in gay pride parades or offering rhetorical statements) is also off limits for government actions. The "New" policy was supposed to strike a balance between free speech and really private adult association on the one hand, and unit cohesion and barracks "sexual modesty" on the other.

Think what returning to "asking" could mean. We could go back to the McCarthy days, when people believed that supposedly "immoral" thoughts and inclinations could not be hidden under a right to privacy; if a behavioral pattern was considered destructive to majoritian notions of an ordered society (such as gender roles and "family values"), government and institutions had every license to dig it out.

> ***"... and in some instances, a degree of openness results in less tension in the unit than does suspicion."***

Common sense, the Political Religious Extremists say. We need to know if a youth is aroused by the same gender before we allow him into the academy, Boy Scouts or football team. All kids must grow up sexually the same. The witch-hunts follow. "Don't Ask" doesn't allow for privacy, it simply validates the witch hunts.

A VISIT WITH THE TROOPS

Last year, I visited the submarine USS Sunfish and two surface ships at the Norfolk Naval Base. I talked at some length to the on-duty service men and (on the tender ship) women and tried to understand their lives and living conditions. Their comments were interesting. They felt the President doesn't care about them; they are very concerned about proposed budget cuts; possible cuts in spousal benefits, and especially longer cruises (and even longer periods away from their families). But they were all very professional and skilled and dedicated in their jobs, many of which required obvious technical skill, accuracy, dependability and problem-solving under pressure.

I detected none of the "homophobia" that seemed to come forth from Senator Nunn's visits and from higher-ups in the military, even though I think I made it clear that I am a gay man. But I did see the weapons' controls and bays, from which missiles (even with nuclear warheads) could be fired, and I did see the sleeping areas on the submarine, 27 berths, stacked three-high and separated by blue canvas, in a room smaller than a walk-in closet.

The submariners did discuss how well they get to know how well their mates think. I think I understand that psychological privacy in this extreme environment is a grave concern.

I have also discussed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" solutions with gay men with considerable military experience. They tell me that keeping "secrets" in a close-knit military environment is nearly impossible, and that in some instances a degree of openness results in less tension in the unit than does suspicion.

I also understand, however, that there is a deeper cultural issue which no "personal conduct," however

See reflections, pg. 2

Conduct, con't from pg. 1

collar, limit make-up to minimal or none, and issue boxy uniforms, then accuse her of not looking "straight" enough, or in other words, like a woman, to them.) One of the pieces of supposedly irrevocable evidence the NIS claims to have found was a copy of Vogue magazine in one of the accused's locker. One NIS agent asked the accused, "Do you get off on looking at their faces or their bodies?" The methods were apparently meant to provoke confessions, but none succeeded.

A QUEST FOR JUSTICE

Engineman Brock became enraged and, with the other women, hired a lawyer. The incident soon made national headlines and Brock even appeared on Phil Donahue to present her case to the nation. This group of women was the first to fight the military's ban on gays so verbally and with so much attention.

"Previously," Brock says, " most people accused sat in a corner quietly, waiting their discharge. *I was not going to let this happen.*" Many of the women involved were young and naive and easily intimidated. Brock's military experience made her a natural leader for this group and she taught them what the military had taught her: how to fight for their rights.

Sadly, Brock's strength did not fare as well back home. When her mother found out Brock was a lesbian, Brock was disowned. Though she had the love and support of a nation of gays and lesbians, it was hard not having the support of many family and friends; but she states it did help her become stronger inside.

Throughout the investigation and proceedings, Brock never admitted her sexuality because it may have lead to her lover's discharge.

"So many times I wanted to come right out and say 'I'm gay, so what? It's none of your business!'" Brock confided. "'Look at my service record. Look at the job I have performed. None of it has been affected by who I was sexually attracted to.' " She knew it wasn't right that her constitutional rights were being strickened from her, not only by what was being done, but by the methods invoked.

With the help of lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union, one by one, charges were dropped. In the end, two women were discharged. Brock's enlistment was over.

She admits that this ordeal has had a permanent affect on her life. It was six years before she and her mother finally discussed her lesbianism, and they are still dealing with it. Brock says she will never again put herself in a position where she can't be honest about who she is.

"It's not about flaunting," Brock says. "It's about not having to hide. Living a double life like I did was draining and extremely stressful because I lived in constant fear. As a human being, no one should ever have to do that."

"It's not about flaunting; it's about not having to hide."

With the release of *Conduct Unbecoming*, much of Brock's anger dissipated as the public learned she was gay. Her truth had finally been told.

According to Brock, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" isn't working.

"The military continues to get away with taking away people's constitutional rights," she said, "and the only way stop it is to fight back and let the public know that it's happening again, and again and again."

Author's note:

Carole Brock is a friend of mine and allowed me the opportunity to interview her for this article. When I first met Carole a few years ago, I liked her immediately. She seemed honest, hardworking, and had a liveliness about her. She lives her life with an integrity that I admired. Little did I know of what she had been through and what had given her so much character.

I deeply admire and respect Carole because she stood up for what she believed in, and for human rights, at a time when most in her situation would not. She paved the way for many after her. Thank you, Carole. I'm honored to have you as a friend.

David Torrey is a local free-lance writer and a full time student at Pikes Peak Community College.

Reflections, con't from pg. 1

beyond reproach, can immediately remedy.

REASONS FOR CHANGE

Yet, there are several compelling reasons for changing military policy, to respect the privacy of all military personnel as much as possible:

(1) Capability for military service is a fundamental responsibility for citizenship; we still have Selective Service registration. To say that homosexuals must be excluded from all military service because of the extreme circumstances in some units (even allowing for the contingent nature of military service) is to say that all gay men and lesbians are second-class citizens, regardless of the facts of their lives.

(2) Most gay men in the military do not discover they are gay until after they have been in the service for a while. (Because many enter as youth, they are still exploring their sexuality as well as their life's directions.) To exclude gays from service academy appointments would assume we ask 17-year-old boys whether they are sexually interested in girls and prove it; yet we "elders" are trying to get our next generation to get its education and practice abstinence!

(3) The "witch hunts" that have been supposedly necessary to enforce the ban offend all of our notions of due process; and they have been used in especially prurient fashion against women by commanders who want to keep the military a private club where men can validate their "masculinity."

(4) Despite all the "theories" about "unit cohesion" and despite testimony from the likes of General Schwarzkopf and other military brass, during wartime (including the Gulf War), gays have served well, and sometimes relatively openly, and without disrupting their units or missions. The overwhelming majority of "incidents" in the service are for heterosexual misconduct.

A HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

In various other groups in the Washington D.C. area, such as Metropolitan Community Church, Adventuring (outdoors), D.C. Sports (athletics) and D.C. Front Runners, I have met with other gay individuals (including service academy graduates) with recent and successfully completed military experience, and I have been deeply impressed with them all. I have been particularly moved by the careers of persons such as Meinhold, Steffan and Thorne, all of whom I have met and talked to personally.

I hope that the Senate Armed Services Committee will come around and support a change in military policy, a change which respects the privacy and sense of personal honor of all military personnel.

Bill Boushka is a Vietnam Veteran and editor of The Quill, *a publication of Gays and Lesbians for Individual Liberty, Washington, D.C.*

BOUSHKA'S CHECKLIST FOR SERVICEPERSONS

If you believe you are under investigation, remember:

(1) UCMJ Article31 gives you the right to remain silent. Coercive tactics by military investigators are illegal, even though they are often used. You do not have to incriminate yourself or "name names."

(2) Any statements, even those made to physicians, chaplains or civilian friends - even family members - can be used against you. Going to gay bars or gay events near a base is not "safe."

(3) Don't sign or initial anything you don't fully understand, or that has white space between text and signature line.

(4) Defending yourself in an administrative discharge proceeding is NOT a do-it-yourself proposition. Seek assistance from the Servicemember's Legal Defense Network (202-328-3244), or the Military Law Task Force (202-233-1701) or a civilian attorney of your own choosing.

(5) If you really haven't broken any military laws, you should be able to stay in and receive all of your benefits upon normally scheduled honorable discharge. But there have been a few cases where the military has investigated and detained servicemembers for suspected "homosexual activity" in order to avoid paying benefits after normal honorable discharge.

Furthermore, in some instances, mere "statements" of homosexual "propensity" have been constructed as "misconduct" resulting in downgrade discharge.

(6) The attitudes towards gay and lesbian servicepersons vary enormously from one commander to another. In practice, commanders have enormous discretion of their own to determine when to initiate investigations and discharge proceedings.

Facts and Briefings

NEVER AGAIN

During the Nazi Holocaust, eight million people perished in the concentration camps — about six million Jewish persons and two million others, including gypsies, political dissenters and Jehovah's Witnesses.

In military fashion, the Nazis created an elaborate system of identifying prisoners. The following is a partial list of symbols that were sewn on the camp clothing:

Jews - *Star of David*
Gypsies - *brown triangle*
Homosexual men - *pink triangle*
Jehovah's Witnesses - *violet triangle*
Persons with interracial marriages - *inverted black-outlined triangle*

Foreigners had to wear the first letter of their nationality within the triangle. Those who tried to escape had red-and-white targets painted on their clothing.

There are conflicting reports as to whether lesbians were singled out by the Nazis; some believe that gay women were marked with black triangles. Others believe that the Nazis tried to "change" lesbians by forcing them into marriages with men or using them as breeders.

POLITICAL PRISONER?

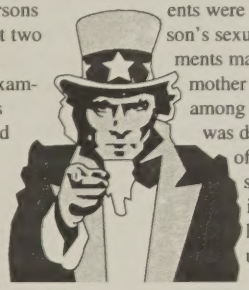
Captain Paul Starr, former U.S. Air Force honored Strategic Air Command Administrator of the Year, was sentenced in 1987 to military prison at Fort Leavenworth for 18 months. Captain Starr was designated a felon for having had consensual sex with another adult in the privacy of his own home.

NURSE DISHONORED

Vietnam Veteran **Margarethe Cammermeyer** was selected as U.S. Army Reserve Nurse of the Year in 1985. Yet, by 1990 Colonel Cammermeyer was ejected from the military. Her crime? — She told the truth about her sexual orientation.

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL VIOLATIONS

According to the Service Members Legal Defense Network, queries into the private lives of our servicepersons have increased during the past two years despite the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. A few examples of how this new policy is being improperly implemented in the field are as follows (taken from actual records):



In Japan, CID Agent Jose Abrante asked a marine point blank, *"Are you gay?"*

In Washington, D.C., a security clearance investigator asked, *"I'm not going to ask you if you're a homosexual, but if I did ask, how would you respond?"*

An inquiry official asked a male Sergeant, *"Do you find men attractive?"* At Ft. Williams, Alabama, another security clearance agent asked a servicemember during an interview *"if she knew any homosexuals?"*

In Florida, recruiters asked one recruit five times if she were a lesbian, both verbally and through the use of outdated written forms, originally used before the DADT policy was implemented.

Air Force Capt. Earl Brown's parents were asked in detail about their son's sexual orientation while statements made by Capt. Brown to his mother and father were included among the statements for which he was discharged. Another mother, of an Air Force doctor, states she was shocked when an inquiring official contacted her to ask about her son's sexual activities.

Corporal Kevin Blaesing, in Charleston, South Carolina, was turned in by his Naval psychologist for asking questions about sexuality during a private counseling session. He now faces discharge proceedings.

On November 3, 1994, after DADT became policy, the Department of the Air Force issued a memorandum specifically directing inquiry officials to "... interview parents and siblings" to obtain information to be used as a basis for discharging gay and lesbian servicemembers.

Lesbian servicemember's 20 years of fear

One day in 1972, while working as a stock clerk at Ft. Huacuaca, AZ, 22 year old Roxie Frank received a notice from the Army CID (Criminal Investigation Division) requesting her assistance and cooperation in an investigation. She asked some friends what could they possibly want from a civilian. Apparently, Frank had been associating with suspected lesbians from the base. It was her first of seven witch hunts.

"They (the investigators) started asking me questions about who I knew, where I'd seen them, had I ever seen any of the women kissing or showing affection to each other," Frank said. " I listened to the questions and told them that yes, I knew so and so. But when they asked me if I had seen (named woman) kissing another woman, I told them even if I had, it was none of their business and walked out." As a civilian, Frank knew she could walk out on a CID agent -- but not as a soldier.

In the 1970s, the military was actively recruiting women in an effort to diversify their forces. She had thought about enlisting, mostly because she "didn't want to be pumping boxes for the rest of my life."

But, after this civilian experience, she had to consider her enlistment and the consequences very carefully.

"I knew I wouldn't get in the military if I told the truth," Frank remembered, "and since the object was to get in, the alternative was to lie, and that was OK. It was a necessary thing."

That lie carried her through 20 years of military service, and through six more intensive investigations.

Initially, witch hunts started with whispers about a "lesbian list."

"When the list rumor started, those women who were gay became more circumspect in their associations," Frank observed. "They tended not to go out as often because they knew that if in fact there was an investigation, then the bars would be watched, and pictures and license numbers would be taken."

The women, including straight women, began to divide their time more equally among their female associations, being careful not to spend more time with one than the other. Even casual forms of affection, hugging, touching and close contact, were off limits during a witch hunt. Friendships and more intimate relationships became stressed because of "guilt by association." If the CID suspected one woman as a lesbian, every other woman she came in contact with was also suspect.

"I remember being called in by my commander and her asking if I had ever hugged one of my fellow soldiers," Frank recalls. "I said 'yes, she had received a 'Dear John' letter from her boyfriend, she was distraught and I let her cry on my shoulder.'

"Now, under normal circumstances, this was no big deal," Frank continued. "But during a witch hunt, you would be pumped with questions like: 'Are you sure that was all you did?,' and 'do you have any feelings for this person?' Then that person would subsequently be dragged in and grilled the same way, and so on."

The CID agents tended to zero in on the younger women, the less experienced and more naive new recruits, then threaten them with dishonorable discharges, court martials and time in Ft. Leavenworth if they did not cooperate and name names, according to Frank.

"The officers, though, had it much tougher than did the enlisted," Frank said, "because it costs a lot less to have an officer discharged."

A charged enlisted servicemember had to go through a lengthy and costly process for discharge.

An officer, however, could be given the option of either a court martial or to resign their commission. The higher up in rank a servicemember went, the more paranoid they became.

"It's quite a coup to catch a senior NCO who is gay," Frank said. "Once an officer's name came up during a witch hunt, they knew their military career was over and would generally resign," she continued. "Either they would be hounded by the CID, or word got out and their commanders would belittle their work performance. Officers across the board were blackmailed, whether they were gay or straight."

"The whole thing is a double-bind," Frank said. "If you don't 'put out,' if you don't wear a dress, if you don't date men, you're accused of being a lesbian. If you date different men and wear dresses, you're a whore, and if you're married, why aren't you home taking care of the kids?"

With all this stress, why did she stay in the military and endure the interrogations?

"Because it was part of the military, like going to the field; sometimes it wasn't so bad and sometimes it was hell," Frank confided. "There was always the fear of getting turned in, but there was also the chance of going into war and getting attacked by a scud missile. But the opportunity to meet the people I did, to travel, to experience what I did, was wonderful."

Would she do it again? "Not in a million years," Frank said. "I will never again put myself in a position where I have to hide and lie just to maintain myself."

According to Frank, Don't Ask, Don't Tell has created a way for commanders to get gays with less risk than before. They don't need to have as much information now; they can take a suspicion from the smallest piece of evidence however irrelevant, and build a case for discharge. The more vague a regulation is, the easier it is to get around, and DADT is very vague.

Still, she has some advice for young women thinking about military service.

" If this is what you want to do, go for it, but watch yourself. Go in, get the experience, travel, learn a marketable skill, get your educational benefits, then get out. Use it as a tool to become who you want to become, but don't make it a career, it's not worth it."

Frank retired after twenty years in the Army in February 1993. She currently attends the University of Colorado in Denver where she majors in communication.

DID YOU KNOW

... that the pink triangle has become a symbol of the quest for equal rights for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people?

... that the pink triangle, upright on concentration camp clothing, was adopted and inverted at the onset of the gay-rights movement as a visual reminder that oppression like that of Nazi Germany should never happen again?

... that the pink triangle within a green circle is posted by businesses to show acceptance and appreciation of all customers, regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation or religion?

... that gay Marines guard the President in the White House Honor Guard and protect the U.S. Embassies around the world?

... that from 1983 to 1995 approximately 18,000 men and women have been discharged from the military because of their sexual orientation, costing hundreds of millions of dollars to taxpayers?

... that the full name of the military policy is "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, *Don't Pursue, Don't Harass?*"

... that in 1995, the Servicemember's Legal Defense Network documented 363 reported violations of DADT including 28 witch hunts, including one currently occurring on the USS Simon Lake in Sardegna, Italy?

... that women were disproportionately hurt by DADT, accounting for 30% of SLDN's cases and 21% of DOD discharges, though making up only 13% of the military's active forces?

VOICES

" In a war, I'd rather have with me a gay shooting straight that a straight shooting crooked."

— English Army Officer during recent military proceedings in England regarding gays in the English Army.

"We must make it clear that a platform of 'I hate gay men and women' is not a way to become president of the United States."

— former U.S. President, Jimmy Carter

"I realized the possible risk I was taking by coming out, but I weighed that against my personal integrity and what we were taught as officers - that you're supposed to help people get over prejudice. It makes them smarter and the military better."

— U.S. Air Force Captain Richard Richenberg, who came out after nine years of distinguished military service, is one of 17 openly gay military personnel who still serve while challenging "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

UPCOMING EVENTS

HUP, TWO, THREE, FOUR! For those who can't even march straight: it is time to start practicing for Pridefest '96 Parade and Rally ... Sunday, June 16th in downtown Colorado Springs! **For details please call Ron (594-4847) or John (685-5509).**

New Phazes and the **Rainbow Riders** invite you to **a mingling and Dance on Friday, April 19th, beginning at 8 p.m. at the Pride Center.** Wine, beer and refreshments will be served. Cost is $1 and a can of food to be donated to S-CAP's food bank. This is a benefit for the Rainbow Wagon Directory; we have 122 people who would like to meet you!

The **AIDS Quilt** is coming to the **Colorado Springs City Auditorium May 16, 17, 18.** This is a rare opportunity and privilege to view the event that has touched tens of thousands of hearts across America. If you have a loved one who has died of AIDS and are interested in making a memorial square, please call PFLAG, 578-8658 or S-CAP, 578-9092.

No one knows for sure when the Supreme Court decision on Amendment 2 will be announced, though it will probably be a Monday. Regardless of the outcome of the decision, ***Ground Zero invites supporters to congregate at the Pride Center, 125 N. Parkside, any time after 4:00 p.m. on "D" day for either a party or protest.***

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Dedicated to securing and maintaining basic civil rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered citizens; and to unifying their participation in the community at large through education, coalition, and visibility.

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Many individuals donated to the fund to support *Someone You Know*. Some chose to be ongoing sponsors on a monthly basis. They are:

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FOUNDATION SUPPORT

The Needmor Fund is a Colorado-based foundation that has as its primary goal the empowerment of those individuals whose basic rights to justice and opportunity are systematically ignored or denied through the funding of grassroots, community-based organizations.

The Chinook Fund is a publicly supported alternative foundation established to provide grants and technical assistance to Colorado grassroots organizations working for progressive social change

The Colin Higgins Fund, advised by the Tides Foundation, funds organizations seeking to effect progressive social change.

The Funding Exchange is a partnership of activists and donors who came together in 1970 to find new ways to support social movements. They coined the phrase "change, not charity" because they believe in the importance of tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice. Allies for Justice is one of their member groups.

The Gill Foundation is a Colorado-based private foundation funding gay, lesbian and bisexual organizations, AIDS organizations, social justice/ human rights advocacy organizations and activities in The Arts that educate about HIV/AIDS, gays, lesbians and bisexuals, and relationships between disenfranchised peoples.

PFLAG

The Colorado Springs Chapter of PFLAG is a non-profit, community-based organization not affiliated with any ethnic, religious, educational, counseling, business or political group.

PFLAG promotes the health and well being of gay, lesbian and bisexual persons, their family and friends, through support to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal rights. **Meets 2nd Wed of each month, 6:30pm social, 7:00pm meeting time. Call 575-8658 for information.**

Someone You Know is underwritten in part by
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If you or your business is interested in underwriting this insert, please call Ground Zero at 635-6086

Yes! Count Me In!

I want to be a part of Ground Zero's project to counter the myths, lies and stereotypes by printing stories about real gays and lesbians and issues in Someone You Know to be inserted in The Independent monthly. There are two ways to help, by volunteering or by making a contribution:

❒ **Volunteer as a writer, editor or researcher.** ❒ **A One Time Donation of $_____.**

❒ **I want to be a Sustaining supporter in the amount of $_____ per month.**
(I have enclosed the first installment.)

❒ **I want to be listed in the insert as a monthly sponsor at $_____ per month (minimum $25).**
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